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On the emergence of new language varieties: The case of the Eastern Maroon Creole in French Guiana

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Discussions of creole language heavily draw on the creole continuum model and the notion of decreolization to explain patterns of language variation and change in creole communities. This is quite unsatisfactory because the continuum model and decreolization assume that the development of creoles is different in kind and in degree from that of other languages. In this paper we challenge this assumption by investigating the synchronic development of the creoles of Suriname in French Guiana. We show that their development is due to complex social forces and linguistic processes and that these are the same as in the case of non-creole languages.

Keywords: Language contact, Creoles of Suriname, creole continuum, language variation and change, koiné, new linguistic varieties

0. Introduction

Historical linguistic research has traditionally assumed that new dialects emerge gradually as the result of the spread of languages due to the migration of part(s) of their speakers to new locations or due to the relative isolation of part of the population in geographically relatively inaccessible locations such as mountainous areas. Social dialectological work (Labov 1963; Britain 2002) has also identified factors such as

negative stereotypes, local rivalry and the absence of public transportation, as causing or enhancing dialect divergence. Finally, the bulk of sociolinguistic research has strikingly demonstrated that social factors such as class or social group membership, age, ethnicity etc. play an important role in constraining patterns of interaction and thereby contribute to the divergence of dialects/varieties.

While dialectological and traditional sociolinguistic research on dialects implicitly or explicitly maintains that linguistic differentiation comes about due to gradual language-internal processes of change, language contact is typically invoked as a prime factor in the emergence of diaspora varieties of a language. Cases in point are diaspora varieties of Hindi (e.g. Siegel 1988, 1990, 1997; Mesthrie 1991) and (new) varieties of English (cf. Kortman and Schneider 2004). Siegel, for instance, has identified the following kinds of processes besides independent language-internal development as having played a role in the emergence of new varieties of Hindi (e.g. Trinidad Hindi, Mauritian Hindi, Guyanese Hindi):

1. Dialect mixing: mixing of features from different regional and local varieties.
2. Formal simplicity: regularization and reduction of categories and loss of inflections.
3. Dialect levelling: loss of input dialect features due to selection of equivalent features from other varieties
4. Focussing: stabilization of a new variety based on the input varieties; sometimes mainly based on a majority variety

In the creation of (new) varieties of English that arose in bilingual and multilingual contact settings (e.g. Singlish English, Irish English), processes of contact-induced language change such as borrowing, convergence, L2 acquisition and substratum

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influence (cf. Thomason and Kaufman 1988; Winford 2003) have been invoked as having had an important impact in their formation.

With respect to creoles, there is now a considerable literature on the processes and sources that contributed to their emergence. Most of the research has provided evidence either in favor of the important role of the languages of the creators of creoles, so-called substrate influence (cf. Keesing 1988; Lefebvre 1998; Siegel 1999; Migge 2003), or the impact of the European languages in the setting, so-called superstrate influence (cf. Chaudenson 1979, 1992). While language internal change (cf. Sankoff and Laberge 1973; Bruyn 1995) has been invoked less often, few, if any scholars, would doubt that it played a role in creole formation. By contrast, there is comparatively little research on the (synchronic) development of creoles. Reviewing literature on variation and change within creole-speaking communities, Aceto (1999: 112) shows that such discussions generally center around the notion of the creole continuum that in turn heavily relies on the notion of decreolization. Decreolization is a "unidirectional process broadly defined as movement away from features associated with the creole and towards features associated with more intermediate varieties of the lexically-related metropolitan variety." (Aceto 1999: 94). Other contact-induced explanations and language-internal changes in particular are rarely invoked in such discussions (but cf. Robertson 1983; Aceto 1996, 1999).

Another consequence of the heavy reliance on the creole continuum and decreolization model for explaining patterns of variation and change in creole-speaking communities is that we only have a partial understanding of the sociolinguistic structure of creoles. Research on creoles widely employs "such terms as "basilect," "mesolect," and "acrolect" [...] in order to categorize and label an abstracted and idealized creole variety spoken by an individual or a community."

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(Aceto 1999: 109). These terms are perceived as occupying spaces on a horizontal continuum. The *basilect* is defined as the variety with the largest amount of creole features, the *mesolect* has fewer creole features than the *basilect* and the *acrolect* is least creole-like or represents the local variety of the European language. These abstract linguistic varieties, originally conceived by DeCamp (1961) and popularized by Bickerton (1975), are also associated in a rather abstract manner with particular social features. The *basilect* is linked to rural and little educated populations while the *acrolect* is associated with urban and highly educated and professional populations. The speakers of the *mesolects* are socially intermediate. Moreover, the *acrolect* is allegedly targeted in formal settings while the *basilect* and the *mesolect* are employed in informal encounters (cf. Rickford 1987). These abstract definitions clearly do not fit all or even most creole communities since they are historically, socially and linguistically quite diverse (Aceto 1999). Socio-historical and historical linguistic work on Caribbean creole communities has also successfully challenged Bickerton's (1975) view that *mesolects* essentially emerged due to *basilect* speakers' greater access to the official European language in the post-emancipation context. This research shows that creole societies were never socially and linguistically homogeneous. From the beginning, different social groups spoke different varieties of creole because they engaged in different patterns of interaction, had different degrees of access to English, African languages and other contact varieties. According to this research, modern (mesolectal or basilectal) varieties essentially emerged due to processes of contact and linguistic focusing from these earlier varieties (cf. Alleyne 1971, 1980; Winford 1997).

Qualitative investigation of variation in creole communities has also demonstrated that creole speakers are not restricted to varieties that could roughly fit

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two or more of the varieties (*basilect*, *mesolect*, *acrolect*) posited by quantitative sociolinguistic research.¹ They show that members of these communities strategically and creatively draw on such varieties and others in order to construct individual and group social identities and relationships. This has led to the emergence of new varieties that are associated with partially distinct social entities (e.g. social groups, settings) (Reisman 1970; LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985; Garrett 2000; Patrick 1997, 1999).

Besides research on the creole continuum, there is also some research on regional variation in creole communities (e.g. the linguistic atlas from Carayol and Chaudenson 1984 for La Réunion or Fattier 1999 for Haiti using dialectological methods), but most of this research is descriptive in nature and does not tell us much about how speakers conceptualize this variation and what role it plays in everyday interactions and in local identity politics. Regional differences are often argued to be due to (partial) differences in the importance of the different linguistic inputs at creole formation or immediately afterwards – i.e. regional European varieties, African languages, other Caribbean creoles – the past and current makeup of the population and the patterns of interaction between the different population groups (cf. Winford 1997).

It is still often assumed that creoles are mono-stylistic and do not show lots of internal varieties. This is surprising since in the words of a dia-model of variation (cf. (Coseriu, 1956, Oesterreicher, 1988, Gadet, 2003) which differentiates between diatopic, diachronic, diastratic and diaphasic variation, the literature on creoles assumes that there is some diaphasic (register) variation in the creole continuum model and diatopic (geographic or regional) variation within the model of dialectology.

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It then appears that creoles, like other languages, also have internal complexity. This complexity seems to have emerged due to different kinds of processes of contact. However, to date little is known about the sociolinguistic structure of any one creole and the social and linguistic processes that contributed to its emergence and maintenance. The aim of this paper is to investigate these issues in relation to the Eastern Maroon Creoles (EMCs) of Suriname and French Guiana. The discussion suggests that contrary to common assumptions, the speakers of these creoles traditionally recognize a range of social and regional or ethnic varieties. In addition, new varieties and practices continue to emerge spurred by social changes that have been affecting these communities in the last 30 years.

The data for this study come from a range of sources. Part of the data come from participant observation mainly in the Pamaka community and among Maroons in St. Laurent du Maroni since 1995, semi-guided discussions with Eastern Maroons (EM) and recordings of natural interactions among and with EMs. The other data come from semi-guided interviews and discussions with members of the multicultural French Guianese society, a survey of school children in French Guiana aimed at obtaining linguistic practices, attitudes, and recordings of natural interactions in different settings such as at the marketplace, at work, within the family, among friends etc. (see (Léglise, 2005, Léglise, 2007).

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 presents the current social and linguistic context in French Guiana. Section 3 discusses the traditional sociolinguistic structure of the Surinamese Creole linguistic space according to Eastern Maroons. Section 4 investigates the social and linguistic changes that have been affecting the Surinamese Creole linguistic space in recent years and section 5 discusses the findings and their implications.

1. Social and linguistic situation in French Guiana

French Guiana (Guyane (française)), located in South America, is a highly multilingual overseas department of France. Besides French, the official and ex-colonial language, about 30 other languages are spoken in this department. It is relatively difficult to obtain precise figures on the number of speakers for each language, including French, because French censuses do not record ethnic and linguistic information. However, available information suggests that about 20 of these 30 languages are spoken by between 1% and 30% of the total population (Léglise, 2007). Officially and for most researchers working in the region, languages are subdivided into so-called indigenous (e.g. Amerindian languages and some creoles such as Créole Guyanais) and immigrant languages (e.g. Haitian Creole, Hmong). This distinction is problematic because the region has been subject to several waves of migration over the last few centuries making it difficult to unambiguously determine immigrant versus regional status. Moreover, in the case of some communities such as Maroons and Amerindian populations, part of its members have been resident in French Guiana for a long time and while others are recent immigrants.² The current situation is, however, of particular interest because the scale of migration has increased considerably over the last 30 years – the 1999 national census show that more than half of the population was born outside of French Guiana.

The following kinds of languages are currently spoken in French Guiana: 6 Amerindian languages, 4 French-based creoles, 5 English-based creoles, the Asian language Hmong, and other official languages of the Caribbean and Amazonian region such as Brazilian Portuguese, Dutch, English, and Spanish. In this paper, we will focus on the Western part of French Guiana and specifically on the situation of

five related English-lexified creoles that originally emerged on the plantations of Suriname (Migge 2003).

The languages Aluku, Ndyuka and Pamaka are associated with three independent Maroon communities bearing the same names. They are the first languages of the members of these communities who have either been residing in French Guiana for more than two centuries or are recent migrants from the interior of Suriname. Based on sociohistorical and comparative linguistic data, linguists argue that they are dialects of a common language called *Nenge(e)*, *Businengetongo* (Goury and Migge 2003) or *Eastern Maroon Creole* (Migge 2003). The fourth variety, Saamaka, usually described as an English-based creole with a significant proportion of Portuguese lexical items (Queixalós, 2000), is associated with an ethnic group by the same name. Finally, Sranan Tongo is the mother tongue of the descendants of slaves who did not flee the plantations of Suriname. It also serves as a lingua franca in multiethnic Suriname (Carlin 2001). Most linguists in French Guiana argue that it is not spoken natively in French Guiana and is not part of the linguistic landscape (Queixalós, 2000, Goury, 2002).

A sociolinguistic survey (Léglise 2004, 2005) carried out over the last seven years provided further insights into the current situation of these creoles in French Guiana. First, it revealed that *Nenge(e)*, essentially the numerically dominant EM variety Ndyuka, is not only practiced as a native language but also appears to be learned as a second language (L2) by school children who are not ethnically Ndyuka and who employ it to interact with Ndyuka friends in the school yard (Léglise, 2004, 2005). Attitudes towards *Nenge(e)* among the whole population are quite contradictory though. It is often described negatively as being “the language of migrants” and considered to lack prestige. However, the fact that it is widely used as a L2 suggests

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that it is becoming a regional lingua franca especially in the town of St Laurent du Maroni and among school children (Léglise 2004). According to Léglise (2007), about 30% of the population declare speaking Nenge(e) as a L1 or L2.

Second, the expression *Saramaka!* functions as an insult in the school yard. It is associated with backwardness. Speakers of Saamaka tend to disguise their ethnic and linguistic background by declaring to be speakers of Nenge(e) rather than Saamaka and by employing Nenge(e) as their main means of communication, especially in inter-ethnic settings (Léglise and Puren 2005). While the Saamaka are, according to Price (2002), numerically the largest Maroon group in French Guiana, their children only make up 5% of the school population in the western part of French Guiana (Léglise 2005). The main reason for this seems to be that most Saamaka reside in remote rural locations that are badly connected to the main urban areas where most of the schools are located. Another explanation is that, due to the recent migrations, after the civil war in Suriname (1986-1992), they no longer constitute the largest group.

Finally, despite frequent claims to the contrary (Queixalós, 2000, Goury, 2002), the survey found that Sranan Tongo is spoken as a mother tongue in French Guiana by both so-called indigenous and immigrant populations. It is the mother tongue and main community language of a small Amerindian group residing in St. Laurent, the Arawaks (Léglise and Puren 2005). They became speakers of Sranan Tongo due to a process of language shift that started roughly 60 years ago. Sranan Tongo is also widely used as a means of inter-ethnic communication. Its vehicularization rate (see Table 1) is not very high among school children possibly because it is only learned in adolescence or adulthood (Léglise 2004) and most children in French Guiana may not be able to distinguish between the contemporary urban Maroon Creole varieties and Sranan Tongo (Léglise and Migge 2005). In fact, a "sort of Sranan Tongo", locally

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referred to as *Takitaki* or *Businenge Tongo*, is widely practiced by non-Maroons in the western part of French Guiana (Léglise and Migge, 2006). The findings of the sociolinguistic then suggest that the contemporary structure of the Creoles of Suriname in French Guiana is much more complex than described in the literature. In the next section we investigate the sociolinguistic structure of these creoles further by exploring the (traditional) linguistic ideology of the main native speaker group, the EMs.

Table 1 illustrates the vehicularization rates for different languages spoken in the biggest town of in western Guyane, St. Laurent du Maroni. The absolute vehicularization rate for a language is calculated by dividing the percentage of people in a location by the percentage of its L1 speakers (Renaud and Dieu 1979). The weighted vehicularization rate, which is more precise, is calculated by dividing the vehicularization rate by the total number of L1 speakers (Calvet 1993). Table 1 shows that *Nenge(e)* is the most widely declared 'language' in St. Laurent, well ahead of Créole Guyanais and Sranan Tongo.

Table 1. Vehicularization rates for the Languages in St. Laurent (Léglise 2004)

	Percentage of Speakers (L1-L4)	Weight of the Language as L1	Absolute Vehicularization Rate	Weighted Véhicularization Rate
Brazilian Portuguese	4,2%	2,5%	1,7	0,07
Haitian Creole	5,4%	4,7%	1,1	0,06
Dutch	5,4%	2,4%	2,2	0,12

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Sranan	19,6%	8,3%	2,3	0,46
Tongo				
Créole Guyanais	13,7%	1,8%	5,7	0,78
Kali'na	5,3%	3,6%	1,5	0,08
Ndyuka	57,1%	39,9%	1,4	0,81
Nenge(e)*	82,1%	56,1%	1,5	1,27

*Nenge(e) refers to all varieties, namely Aluku, Ndyuka, Pamaka.

2. The (traditional) native view of the EM linguistic space

Eastern Maroons employ a range of language terms that refer to different locally recognized varieties. Traditionally, they differentiate between varieties that are associated with local ethnic groups (i.e. regional varieties) and those that are associated with specific settings (i.e. registers) or social groups (i.e. social varieties). Below we discuss each in turn.

2. 1. Ethnic or regional varieties

EMs make reference to five EM varieties, namely Aluku, Ndyuka, Pamaka, Kotika and Saakiiki. The first three varieties are associated with independent EM communities bearing the same names. The members of the Kotika and Saakiiki communities are members of different upriver Ndyuka lineages who have come to settle along the lower Maroni/Maroweijne River, the Commoweijne River and the Sara Creek since the early part of the 20th century. Due to their geographical

separation from the upriver Ndyuka and the significant size particularly of the Kotika community, they have over the years come to be recognized as quasi-independent communities and their varieties as distinct from upriver varieties. However, to date there are no studies that systematically investigate the similarities and difference between upriver Ndyuka and Kotika varieties.

The differences between the three main EMCs (Aluku, Pamaka, Ndyuka) are largely phonological and lexical in nature (e.g. Goury and Migge 2003).³ From a linguistic point of view, they are relatively minor but they function as important markers of local social identities. For instance, socially very significant phonological differences between Aluku (AL) and Pamaka (P) on the one hand and Ndyuka (ND) on the other involve the alternation between long and short word final vowels in some lexical items (1), the alternation in vowel height of word final front vowels (2) and the absence and presence of intervocalic liquids (3).

(1) word final vowel length

PM/AL	ND	gloss
<i>wata</i>	<i>wataa</i>	‘water’
<i>nenge</i>	<i>nengee</i>	‘person/language’
<i>boso</i>	<i>bosoo</i>	‘brush’

(2) word final vowel height

PM/AL	ND	gloss
<i>meki</i>	<i>meke</i>	‘make’
<i>teki</i>	<i>teke</i>	‘take’

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(3) realization of intervocalic liquids

PM/AL	ND	gloss
<i>kali</i>	<i>kai</i>	‘call’
<i>weli</i>	<i>wei</i>	‘wear’

In addition to the five EM varieties, EMs recognize four other ethnic varieties, namely Saamaka, Sranan Tongo, Matawai and Kwinti. Saamaka, Matawai and Kwinti are each associated with the three Maroon communities bearing the same name originally from central and eastern Suriname. Sranan Tongo is the language of the urban population, particularly those of African descent are often referred to as *fotonenge* ‘the Blacks of Paramaribo (Foto)’. Although all Surinamese Creoles descend from the same plantation varieties (Migge 2003), they differ somewhat linguistically and are not fully mutually intelligible due to partially different linguistic developments. Urban varieties of Sranan Tongo have been subject to relatively strong influence from Dutch while the varieties that developed into Saamaka (SM) and Matawai in particular were in close contact with Portuguese or Portuguese contact varieties during their emergence (Arends 1999; Smith 1999). The nature of the structural similarities and differences between the Surinamese Creoles can be illustrated by considering the structure of potential modality given in Table 2.

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Table 2. Possibility in the Creoles of Suriname (cf. Migge and Winford to appear)

Forms				CATEGORY	Meanings
PM	ND	SM	SN		
LEARNED ABILITY					
sabi	sabi	sá	sabi fu		Ability or skills acquired through learning or training
POTENTIAL					
sa	sa	sa	man/	Positive	Physical ability (Deontic) Ability subject to physical or natural law. deontic (root) possibility Ability/possibility subject to moral or social law, involving situations under the agent’s control permission Deontic possibility imposed by authority (social, legal, etc.).
man	poy	sa	kan	Negative	
			kan		
			mag		
sa	sa	sa	kan	Positive	epistemic possibility Possible situations, or situations to the certainty of which the speaker is not committed.
sa	sa	sa	kande	Negative	
kan-	kan-	kande	(sa)		
de	de				

Briefly, Table 2 shows that in all the Creoles of Suriname learned ability is expressed using the verb *sa(bi)*. Differences are found with respect to the expression of other potential meanings. First, while the Maroon Creoles have a single potential category

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which is expressed using the marker *sa*, Sranan Tongo distinguishes several different categories, namely physical ability, root and epistemic possibility, and permission using distinct elements to convey them. Second, the EMCs differentiate between positive and negative potential contexts while Saamaka does not. Third, Pamaka (and Aluku) use *man* to convey negative potential modality and Ndyuka uses *poy*.

Synchronic and diachronic linguistic and sociohistorical evidence suggest that the early plantation varieties were characterized by a relatively great amount of variation. With respect to the potential domain, it seems likely that at least several of the currently attested elements, e.g. *sa*, *kan*, *man*, *poy*, coexisted in earlier varieties as means for expressing the same or partially overlapping potential modality meanings. Over time, each form became associated with different emerging social and ethnic group. It is possible to hypothesize that the distinction between *sa* and *kan* is related to a rural/urban or Maroon/non-Maroon social differentiation since the Dutch-derived item *kan* continues, even today, to be strongly associated with an urban orientation. The distinction between *man* and *poy* conveys a socially pertinent inter-Maroon social distinction – the smaller Maroon groups were historically much dominated by the Ndyuka and they still like to differentiate themselves from Ndyukas.⁴ The adoption of Dutch-derived elements such as *mag* are most likely due to the comparatively strong influence from Dutch on the varieties that developed into Sranan Tongo.

2. 2. Social varieties

Traditionally, Eastern Maroons distinguish five broad social varieties.

(4) Social varieties

a) *lesipeki taki* 'respect speech'

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b) *kowounu taki* 'ordinary speech'

c) *basaa nenge(e)* 'non-Maroon speech'

d) *keliki taki* 'church speech'

e) *fositen nenge* 'earlier talk'

f) *afïikan tongo* 'African (ritual) languages'

Respect speech (*lesipeki taki*) differs from ordinary speech both socially and linguistically. While ordinary speech (*kowounu taki*) is commonly identified with low status and every day social interaction, e.g. informal chats among women and men, parent-child talk, talk accompanying subsistence work activities, respect speech is reserved for formal settings, e.g. talk among and with elders, socio-political meetings, delicate topics. Linguistically, respect talk is characterized by a range of negative politeness strategies, e.g. a special polite vocabulary to replace potential taboo terms, special status-indicating address terms, verbal indirectness, special turn-taking rules etc. (Migge 2004). By contrast, ordinary speech is best described as conversational talk. It is characterized by positive politeness strategies including relative directness of expression, use of vulgar and taboo vocabulary and the relative absence of special turn-taking rules.

Basaa nenge is broadly associated with L2 varieties of the EMC. They can often be differentiated from native talk on the basis of a range of structural differences, e.g. absence of certain functional elements, absence of allomorphs (Léglise and Migge 2006). *Keliki taki* is the language traditionally used in church books and during mass. It is a stylized, non-native variety of Sranan Tongo used by early missionaries. *Foisten Tongo/Nenge* is the language used by early slaves and runaways. Today, it is heard in spirit possession ceremonies when the spirits of the

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early slaves and runaways communicate with present-day Maroons. It is also a stylized variety that resembles Sranan Tongo in several respects. *Afiikan Tongo* refers to the different ritual languages that are based on the first languages of the Surinamese Creoles such as Loango (Kikongo varieties), Popo (Gbe varieties), Kromanti (Akan varieties).

3. The Eastern Maroon Creoles migrate to the coast

Since roughly the 1950s and particular due to the civil war in Suriname in the late 1980s, members of all Maroon societies have increasingly been migrating to regional urban centers in Suriname and particularly in French Guiana. This has led to the relative depopulation of the traditional villages and given rise to changes in the social and linguistic practices of the Maroon populations.

3.1. Changes in the linguistic repertoire and in-group linguistic practices

Traditionally, Maroons employed their variety of the EMC for all their communicative needs. Only a small number of men who regularly engaged with members from other communities for purposes of trade or who had spent some time doing paid labor on the coast acquired active competence in one of the main regional lingua franca, Sranan Tongo (Suriname) or Créole Guyanais (Guyane). Competence in the official languages of the region, Dutch (Suriname) and French (Guyane), was even less common among the rural Maroon population since formal schooling did not

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become widely available until the 1970s and was severely disrupted during the 1980s due to the civil war in Suriname.

This situation changed, however, when Maroons started migrating permanently to the coast. In both rural and urban coastal contexts they entered into more or less regular interactions with other members of the Surinamese and/or French Guianese multi-ethnic societies. For instance, they came to live in mixed neighborhoods, entered paid labor and subsistence work networks with members from different local communities, engaged in trade with members from other local ethnic groups, and attended educational and training institutions and social venues frequented by members from all local social groups. Linguistically, this shift in interactional patterns meant that Maroons had to expand their linguistic repertoires. They had to acquire some competence in the related urban creole and regional lingua franca Sranan Tongo or in Créole Guyanais to interact with the members of the other local populations. For those attending educational institutions and seeking work in more skilled jobs, it also became a necessity to acquire competence in either or both of the official languages, Dutch (Suriname) and French (French Guiana) (Léglise and Migge, 2005).

The expansion of the linguistic repertoire has also led to changes in individual and community linguistic practices. On the one hand, we observe a greater incidence of borrowing. There is a noticeable increase in the use of mainly lexical items from Sranan Tongo, Dutch and French to denote things that are relevant to people's life in the new urban context. Most terms relate to administration, food, new habits and locations. So for instance, French words such as *poubelle* 'rubbish bin', *allocation (familial)* 'social security money for families', *pointer* 'monthly registration for job seekers' are now widely used among Maroons in French Guiana.

On the other hand, we find a greater use of Sranan Tongo in in-group encounters. EMs increasingly employ code-mixing and code-switching to construct newly emerging social distinctions and meanings. Elders, for instance, employ code-switching with Sranan Tongo to downplay the traditionally strongly hierarchical nature of their social relationships with each other and with younger members of the community. By code-switching, they project a peer group or friendship-type relationship with their interlocutor. In example (5), for instance, *Kabiten* Anton wants to talk to one of the authors, Bettina, who was a bystander at a semi-formal meeting between the paramount chief (*Gaaman*) and two village/sublineage heads, *Kabiten* Anton and *Kabiten* Obi at the paramount chief's house - *Gaaman* and *Kabiten* Anton are in their seventies while *Kabiten* Obi is in his late fifties. To talk to her, *Kabiten* Anton has to seek permission from *Kabiten* Obi and *Gaaman*. *Kabiten* Anton switches to Sranan Tongo, or a Pamaka influenced by Sranan Tongo, when addressing *Kabiten* Obi. By switching, he is invoking their personal (former work mates) rather than their positional identities (*kabiten*-hood) and emphasizing the lack of social distance between him and *Kabiten* Obi. In foregrounding his peer group or friendship-type relationship with *Kabiten* Obi, he conveys to *Kabiten* Obi that his desire to talk to Bettina is non-threatening. He is asserting that he is not trying to compete with Bettina's attention.

(5) *Pikin kuutu*

1 Anton: Ma, daaa, fa de e kai a flou nen?

But, so what's the woman's name?

2 Bettina: Bettina!

3 Anton: Soo Betna. (.)

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Okay, Bettina.

4 (to O) So, da (.) kabiten, mi kan (ST) taki ptyin tori (ST)

Okay, well kabiten, can (ST) I chat a little bit (ST)

5 anga a uman pikinso yere (ST)? A no (ST) wan mulikimuliki toli.

with the woman, right (ST)? It's nothing (ST) bothersome.

6 Obi: (nods approvingly and laughs)

7 Obi: Iya, iya papa!

Yes, yes elder!

(adapted from Migge 2007: 65-66)

Young people generally employ code-switching to construct themselves as sophisticated and urbanized Maroons and code-mixing to assert membership in the social group of young men whose salient properties are modern urban sophistication (Migge 2007). An example of code-mixing is given in (6). It comes from a meeting between Pamaka men in their mid 30s who head a local Maroon cultural group. They are discussing the activities of their group. Note that in this turn, the speaker is frequently alternating between Pamaka, the matrix language, and Sranan Tongo, Dutch and French forms.⁵ This alternation does not appear to serve local interactional functions such as (re)negotiating the relationship between interlocutors. Instead, it's the overall pattern rather than the individual switch that indexes social meaning. By alternating between languages, B claims membership in the social group of young Maroon men (cf. Migge 2007).

(6) *yunkuman kuutu*

B: *Ini a pisi toli san (ST) u taki fu a án serjusu (ST) fu u án libisama.*

'In this story that we're talking about if it isn't serious then we're not humans.'

A ini a pisi ape mi o taki, mi o piki oo! Te yu nanga (ST) u án man e wooko ma a

'I will say something about this part, I will respond! If we cannot work together but'

de ini i konde oo, da i mu luku a wooko fini.

'it [the event] takes place in your village, then you have to carefully consider the it.'

Efu i lobi a waka dati u án da i o gwe go namo na a wooko.

'If you like that kind of journey, we don't, then you'll definitely go and take up the job.'

Di i sabi di i no sabi, i o gwe go na a wroko omdat (ST/D) i wani teki a wooko,

'Even if you don't know [the job], you'll take up the job because you want to have it,'

a de a ini i sikin. Dati u, a ini a dei di i basi no (ST) de, i mu man du wan sani,

'it is you desire. That we, the day that your boss won't be there, you'll have to be able'

o ehee leki fa (ST) u e taki a toli fu den skoro a yari disi (ST). A yari san psa (ST),

'to do something. Ahm yes, like we were talking about the schools this year. Last year,'

u luku a yari disi (ST). U akisi kon fu go ini wan skoro ma omdat (ST) a pamplia fu

'we were contemplating this year. We were asked to go to a school but because'

organisasi (D) no (ST) be herken door (D) lanti

'the organization had not been officially recognized by the government'

pe den man fu education national (F) musu (ST) stort (D) a moni gi u.

'where the people of the [French] ministry of education have to send the money for us.'

Den no (ST) man sabi pe den mu stort (D) en gi i pe a sama meki

'They don't know where they should send it for you, where the person makes'

a poking (D) fu Awibenkiiben, mi á be abi en. Den naki ana gi en kloplop (ST/D),

'the attempt for Awibenkiiben, I did not have it. They claped for him,'

a man ne en nen a e meki kaba. Dus (D) na so a dansi de,

'the guy, he's already made a name for himself. Thus that's what the dance is like,'

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na so wan grupa (D) de, na so wan libi mu de. Kwolon! Mi ná e taki moo.

‘such a group exists, that kind of life should be there. Finish! I am not saying anything else.’

3. 2. Towards Koinization

On the coast where the members of the different Maroon groups are in much more regular contact with each other and with members from other local social/ethnic groups (e.g. Haitians, Amerindians, Créole Guyanais, metropolitan French) who are culturally and linguistically relatively different from them, Maroons develop a different sense of ethnic belonging. Unlike previous generations of Maroons who generally emphasized inter-Maroon differences, in the current context, especially young Maroons foreground and emphasize the similarities that exist between the different Maroon groups. The identity that they construct for themselves is that of ‘Businenge or Maroon’, a pan-Maroon identity that transcends the traditional ethnic divisions.

One piece of evidence in favor of the existence or emergence of such a pan-Maroon identity comes from the results of a school survey (Léglise, 2004) where primary and secondary school children were asked by a metropolitan French researcher to discuss their linguistic practices. When discussing their linguistic repertoire, the children generally only referred to their native language using terms such as *Takitaki* and *Businenge Tongo* that are strongly associated with a pan-Maroon identity. Language names associated with specific ethnic groups and identities (Aluku, Pamaka ...) were either only supplied on repeated questioning by the researcher or not at all (Léglise and Migge 2006).

(7) During the interview :

Res.: *Quelle langue tu parlais avant d'aller à l'école?*

'Which language did you speak before starting school?'

Child: *Takitaki.*

Res.: *Lequel?*

'Which one?'

Child: *Businenge.*

Res.: *Oui mais lequel?*

'Yes, but which one?'

Child: *Ben Businenge, Takitaki c'est pareil.*

'Well, Businenge, Takitaki, it's the same.'

Linguistically, this process of identity formation seems to be giving rise to processes that are also associated with koinization. According to Siegel (1985), koinization involves mixing of features from different related regional dialects, levelling of such features, formal reduction, and finally focusing of a new 'mixed' variety. Examples (5-6) suggest that dialect mixing involving Sranan Tongo and the Maroon varieties has become rather widespread even in in-group encounters. We also find that processes of leveling are in progress. Essentially, ethnically or rurally marked linguistic features are increasingly leveled towards more 'neutral' forms. For instance, Maroons frequently remark on the fact that the down-river Ndyuka do not realize word final long vowels (cf. 1) in the same way as up-river Ndyuka; the vowels in down-river Ndyuka are noticeably shorter though still different from those associated with Aluku and Pamaka varieties. The realization of very long vowels has become associated with a rural and traditional Ndyuka identity. Moreover, strongly ethnically marked morphosyntactic features such as the verbal negation marker (*á* (Ndyuka), *án*

(Pamaka/Aluku)) and the negative potential marker (*man* (Pamaka, Aluku), *poi*

(Ndyuka)) are variably replaced with more ethnically neutral equivalents that usually come from Sranan Tongo, namely *no* and *kan*, respectively.

Leveling also affects speech acts. A case in point are greeting procedures. The EMC has a number of different greeting procedures. Some require careful interplay between interlocutors, are rather formulaic and are specific to particular times of the day (8).

(8) some traditional Maroon greeting procedures

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. A: <i>U weki oo, gaaman.</i> | 'We have awoken, paramount chief.' |
| B: <i>Iya, u weki yee/baa.</i> | 'Yes, we have awoken!' |
| A: <i>Eeya/Iya.</i> | 'Yes' |
| b. A: <i>U miti oo, mma.</i> | 'We meet, [female] elder.' |
| B: <i>Iya, u miti (baka) yee/baa, papa.</i> | 'Yes, we meet (again), elder!' |
| A: <i>Eeya/Iya.</i> | 'Yes' |
| c. A: <i>Dda, a tapu u (baka) oo.</i> | '[Male] elder, it [the night] has fallen (again).' (lit. 'it covers us again') |
| B: <i>Iya, a tapu u yee.</i> | 'Yes, it has fallen!' |
| A: <i>Eeya/Iya.</i> | 'Yes' |
| d. A ₁ : <i>Mma, da u de (mooi)?</i> | 'Mrs. G., then, are you well?'
(lit. 'then we/you (pl.) exist well') |
| B ₁ : <i>Iya, u de (mooi) yee/baa!</i> | 'Yes, I am well!'
(lit. 'we/you (pl.) exist nicely!') |
| <i>U seefi de (mooi)?</i> | 'You yourself, are you well?'
(lit. 'we/you (pl.) self exist nicely?') |

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A₂: *Iya, u de (mooi) yee/baa.*

‘Yes, I am well!’

(lit. ‘we/you (pl.) exist nicely for sure’)

B: *Iya/Eeya.*

‘yes’ (from Migge 2005)

In actual practice, greetings (a-c) are generally combined with greeting (d), though each of them can also be used on its own. These greetings are regularly used in the rural context. However, they convey a relatively great social distance between the interlocutors. Moreover, the interlocutors pay each other respect and construct each other as respectable persons by using these greetings.

There are also two main shorter greetings that can be applied throughout the whole day.

(9) a. A: (*Sa Moiboto*), *fa i tan?*

‘Mrs Moiboto, how are you?’

B: *Saaflio/Saafsaafi/Mi de.*

‘Well/I am well.’

b. A: (*Baa Aseengi*), *fa a e go?*

‘(Mr A.) how is it going?’

B: *Mi de/A e go/Saafsaafi/saaflio*

‘I am well/as usual/well.’

These greetings, particularly (9b), is associated with the urban context and Sranan Tongo. These greetings convey social closeness and relative social equality between the interlocutors, essentially a friendship-type relationship. In the rural context, the greetings in (9) are only employed among young people while middle-aged persons and elders use the greetings in (8). In the traditional ideology, young people are considered to be members of the lowest social category and, unlike elders, tend to maintain relaxed kinds of friendship-like relationships among each other. In the urban

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setting, however, EMs of all generations/social groups increasingly use the greetings in (9) in regular everyday interactions with members from all social groups. The longer greetings (8) are increasingly being reserved for special occasions associated with situations that require heightened attention to negative face such as demands for help, complaints, formal events, strongly hierarchical relationships, e.g. with in-laws (Migge 2005).

Finally, we also observe the emergence of new, mixed varieties. In recent years, due to grass-roots efforts, in both French Guiana and Suriname new radio programs have been emerging that are broadcast in local languages and are targeting specific local ethnic population groups. A case in point is the radio program *loweman paansu*. It broadcasts in and around St. Laurent du Maroni (French Guiana) for two to three hours in the late afternoons from Monday to Friday. It is produced on a voluntary basis by young urbanized Maroon men with a Ndyuka ethnic background. The program primarily targets the extensive (Eastern) Maroon population of the area but members of other ethnic groups such as Amerindians that are familiar with the Surinamese Creoles also listen to it. It covers a range of topics that are of interest to all sections of the EM population such as presentation and discussion of local popular music, discussions of health issues, political matters, local news, birthdays, obituaries etc. News programs and discussions of local sociopolitical issues are carried out especially in the EM respect variety (Migge 2004). However, there are a couple of salient differences between the traditional respect variety and the one used on the air (cf. Migge in preparation). First, the radio variety does not employ discontinuous speech and does not have a dialogic nature (i.e. it does not involve a ritual responder). Second, speakers make greater use of rurally-marked forms rather than the special respect vocabulary and figures of speech to encode negative politeness. Third, there is

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a greater use of foreign lexical items in the radio variety than in the traditional variety.

In the latter, use of anything other than the local EM variety is considered problematic in that it is easily interpreted as a lack of alignment with the local community (Migge 2005). Based on discussions with regular listeners of the program, it appears that these discursive changes are positively evaluated. They contribute towards mitigating the sometimes quite opaque nature of traditional respect speech (cf. Migge 2004) and, in conjunction with the topics discussed, towards projecting an aura of modernity to the broadcast without compromising its distinctive Maroon character.⁶

3. 3. Vehicularization

Especially since the civil war in Suriname in the late 1980s, Maroons in general and EMs in particular have emerged as one of the largest 'ethnic groups' in western French Guiana. Members of other local ethnic groups, including metropolitan French persons, have either felt obliged to or have desired to learn the EMC to integrate in some areas, such as the west of French Guiana, where EMs are numerically very dominant (Léglise 2004, Thurmes 2007). To a small extent, these L2 practices are also used for communication between non-Maroons, e.g. members of different Amerindian communities, Hmongs and Amerindians etc.

Non-native or L2 practices are quite diverse ranging from relatively reduced learner varieties to near-native like practices (Léglise and Migge 2006). Generally, L2 varieties would differ in two main respects from the EM practices: First, they show varying degrees of structural reduction and/or variation mostly not found in native practices. For example, relatively acoustically imperceptible function elements whose functions can also be inferred from the context are either completely or variably absent (e.g. the imperfective marker *e* and the future marker *o* in (10)), or are replaced

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by elements from another language (e.g. the conditional element *efu* which is replaced by French *si* in (10)). Inherently variable forms tend to be regularized to a perceptually salient form. For instance, while the 2nd person singular pronoun in the EMC is realized either as *i*, *y* or *yu* depending on the phonological environment, it is generally realized as *yu* in L2 varieties (Léglise and Migge 2006).

- (10) a. *Si* Ø *no* Ø *teki* *dresi*, *yu* Ø *dede mama*. (L2)
 efu i ná e teki/diingi den deesi, i o dede mama. (EM)
 if you NEG IMP take/drink DET tablets you FUT die female elder
 ‘Grandma, if you don’t take your medicine, you may die’

Second, L2 speakers tend to select Sranan Tongo lexical items over EM ones in those cases in which the two differ despite the fact that most L2 speakers would mainly interact with Maroons. The relative preponderance of Sranan Tongo-derived lexical items is most likely due to the fact that EMs tend to shift to Sranan Tongo in all kinds of public out-group contexts. Moreover, Sranan Tongo figures prominently in urbanized speech by young (male) Maroons (see above).

Socially, the most immediate effect of its increasing acquisition and use by non-Maroons is the maintenance of the language. From the point of view of the native speakers, its acquisition by non-natives contributes to the social valorization of the language as a valuable means of communication. This, in turn, contributes to its maintenance within the native speaker community/-ies.

Linguistically, depending on the overall frequency and importance of exchanges with non-native speakers, its use as an L2 variety may further reinforce patterns of variation and change that are already in progress in native practices. For instance, the

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increased use of lexical elements from Sranan Tongo and simple as opposed to complex prepositional phrases in interactions as a way of accommodation to non-Maroons may lead to a further establishment of their use in intra-Maroon practices.⁷

4. The role of social and linguistic processes in lg. diversification

The developments discussed suggest that linguistic diversification in the case of the EM linguistic space is due to both processes of social and linguistic convergence and divergence. Convergence involves processes that lead to the reduction or elimination of social and linguistic differences while divergence refers to processes that bring about the creation of social and linguistic differences or contribute to their emphasis. Social processes such as urbanization (i.e. displacement and reorientation in a new environment), new identity formation (i.e. pan-Maroon identity), and emergence of new interactional patterns (i.e. increased out-group interaction with L2 speakers and native speakers of related varieties) lead to convergence. Socially, they bring about new contexts of interaction, practices and inter-group relationships that transcend or crosscut traditional ethnic boundaries. Linguistically, they give rise to contact and mixing between existing varieties, and to the leveling of differences between them and, eventually possibly, to the emergence of a new 'compromise' variety such as a koine that would be added to people's existing repertoire.

Two kinds of leveling processes seem to take place.

- a) In interactions between speakers of different native varieties (Aluku, Ndyuka...), speakers tend to level marked differences between their varieties (e.g. relative shortening of long vowels in Ndyuka, adoption of Sranan Tongo forms to replace ethnically-marked morphosyntactic differences) towards a common 'neutral' norm.

- b) With respect to interactions between native and non-native speakers, L2 learners only acquire the most widely/frequently available practices while native speakers tend to select only those practices that they deem to be widely/easily understood (e.g. the use of Sranan Tongo vocabulary items).

In French Guiana (and Suriname), these processes operating in native-native encounters and in native-non-native encounters happen to be linked through local language ideologies to similar kinds of linguistic practices. For EMs, relative social neutrality in interethnic encounters and simplicity or accommodation in interactions are encoded by drawing on Sranan Tongo-associated practices. This then suggests that these different social and linguistic processes lead to similar linguistic outcomes: They reinforce the use of Sranan Tongo practices.

In contrast, the assertion of various individual (e.g. respectable), traditional (e.g. Aluku, Pamaka...), new group identities (e.g. sophisticated urban EM), gives rise to patterns of social and linguistic divergence, differentiation and fragmentation. So for instance, young Eastern Maroons increasingly employ code-mixing and code-switching using both Sranan Tongo and European (Dutch and French) lexical items (6) to assert their difference from other social groups within the community who most engage in code-mixing with Sranan Tongo only. In more formal situation, elders tend to employ certain features of respect speech such as long figures of speech (*nongo*) that are not easily comprehensible to urban Maroons to index their traditional knowledge and their social importance.

Essentially, in accordance with their goals, speakers draw in selective ways on the locally available linguistic and social resources, including ethnically neutral as well as marked forms, to construct unique individual and group identities.

Linguistically, this leads to a kind of reorganization and linguistic instability that over

time develops into stable variation, code-switching, and gives rise to the emergence of new styles.

5. Conclusions and Implication

The discussion in this paper suggests the following things about the development of the Surinamese Creole linguistic space. First, on the micro-linguistic level we showed that speakers creatively and strategically draw on different varieties and emblematic markers in accordance with a range of social factors such as the communicative situation, the interlocutors, their self-positioning, their goals etc. All of these constitute good examples of individual agency. While these are the activities of individuals, they may lead to the expansion or diversification of the community's linguistic repertoire through social and linguistic focusing (LePage and Tabouret-Keller 1985). Cases in point are the emergence of new styles that we discussed. The individuals' mixing of native EM linguistic practices with external ones (e.g. from Sranan Tongo) has led to the emergence of the EM style *wakaman taki* and the blending of two different native styles (*wakaman taki* + *lesipeci taki*) and is leading to the formation a new formal style (radio talk). These new styles are added to the existing styles and classic language varieties/styles (cf. the social and ethnic varieties discussed in section 2). This suggests that the EM linguistic repertoires are open-ended and non-static – new styles or varieties are continually added to existing ones.

Second, creoles, like other languages, involve different types of variation. Taking a *dia-* model of variation, our case shows diatopic (geographic) and dialectal variation, and diachronic and diaphasic (stylistic and register) variation. As for diastratic variation (due to social factors and social stratifications), our case shows the same results as for diaphasic variation. We assume that this is due to the social

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structure of the EM societies. Their social structure is less organized in terms of social groups (lower middle class etc.) which are associated with specific varieties. Instead it depends on social events (such as *kuutu*) and on ways of addressing the elders etc (in other words, on diaphasic constraints).

Third, on a macrolinguistic level, we observed linguistic variation and change and the emergence of new varieties: L2 varieties and new dialect varieties through what could be a process of koineization.

The findings from our investigation challenge two of the main tenets of the creole continuum theory. First, they suggest that the assumption that changes in the linguistic repertoire of a creole community and in a creole's structure is largely due to contact with an external variety or erstwhile lexifier, e.g. English. Our case shows that changes may also occur due to contact between different varieties of the same language induced by a range of social forces and by contact with a related language, Sranan Tongo. The influence of the official languages of the region (French, Dutch) is relatively minor despite their overall symbolic and economic importance.

Second, the findings challenge the assumption that linguistic change in the case of creoles is unidirectional. Our study shows that different social forces give rise to two kinds of (contradictory) linguistic development. On the one hand, we found a reduction in diversity (e.g. through leveling and the reduction of the differences between ethnic varieties in favor of an emergent pan-Maroon variety) and on the other hand we observed an increase in diversity (e.g. with the emergence of new EM styles, new non-EM styles and new linguistic structures).

Moreover, the present case seems to be an instance of a mix of two classic cases of dialect contact: It involves contact involving L1 and L2 speakers on one hand

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and contact among L1 speakers of different dialects on the other (Kerswill and Williams, 2000).

The investigation of the Surinamese Creole linguistic space makes it quite clear that current models of the creole continuum are not applicable in situations where "the" creole is no more in contact with its erstwhile lexifier. At least in these situations (but probably also in the case of the 'classic' creole communities), language variation and change including the emergence of new varieties is conditioned by social and linguistic forces and processes similar to those that operate in other non-creole contact settings.

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¹To our knowledge, there isn't a single creole community that uses the academically popular terms *acrolect*, *mesolect* and *basilect* to designate its language varieties.

²According to the European charter for regional and minority languages, a regional language is a language that has a long history and a clearly definable speaker community in a country and its speakers are (in the majority) citizen of the country in question. Moreover, the language does not function as an official language in another country (cf. Cerquiglini 2003). By contrast, immigrant languages are spoken by persons and groups who have only relatively recently settled in the department. While the former can be integrated into the school system as well as funding can be accessed for their study and instrumentalization, this is not generally the case for immigrant languages.

³There are also intonational differences between the three varieties but they have not yet been investigated.

⁴Note also that *poy* has overtones of being 'deep', 'original' and 'powerful'.

⁵Only one turn is provided since turns are very long in these kinds of meetings.

⁶This is in line with Garrett's (2007) observations of radio broadcasting in St. Lucia. He shows that St. Lucian radio broadcasts that employ speech patterns and formats that are modeled on local, everyday forms of communication tend to be more popular among listeners. By contrast, heavily structured (cf.

Irvine 1979) or in the case of St. Lucia heavily artificially restructured or instrumentalized varieties

tend to attract a much smaller audience since they are not easily intelligible to them.

⁷Complex prepositional phrases: *na* NP locational N (*na a tafa tapu* 'on the table'); simple

prepositional phrases: P NP (*tapu a tafa; na tapu a tafa*).